

## **Middle School Lesson 2**

### **The Gettysburg Address and the Character of Lincoln**

#### **Opening Quote\***

“The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just; it shall not deter me.”

-Abraham Lincoln, “Speech on the Sub-Treasury,” Illinois House of Representatives (1839).  
Quoted in Roy P. Basler., ed. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*: 178.

#### **Learning Objectives**

- Analyze a written primary source
- Discover evidence of human character traits from written words
- Connect the use of historical reference to an event

#### **Materials Needed**

*\* Indicates material included at the end of the lesson.*

- For the teacher:
  - Opening Quote\*
  - Image of the original Gettysburg Address as written by President Lincoln (you can find this image online through the [Webliography](#))
  - Transcription of the Gettysburg Address\*
  - Transcription of the letter inviting Lincoln to participate in ceremonies dedicating Gettysburg as a national cemetery\*
  - Transcription of Edward Everett’s letter to Lincoln after the Gettysburg speech\*
  - Overhead projector, computer with projector, or printed images posted on board
- For the students:
  - Pencils, pens, notebooks
  - Transcription of the Gettysburg Address\*
  - Written Document Analysis Worksheet\*

#### **Guiding Questions for the Gettysburg Address**

- How is Lincoln’s character defined by the Gettysburg Address? Give examples: *Reverence for history, American ideals, etc...*
- How is Lincoln’s faith in Americans illuminated by his choice of words for the speech? *Give concrete examples found in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.*

#### **Suggested Lesson Procedure**

- Read Opening Quote\* from board or overhead. Ask students what they think Lincoln meant. *Point out that the quote is not from the Civil War.*
- Show the image you selected from the web of the original *Gettysburg Address*. Stop to discuss the value of preserving primary documents. Pass out copies of the Transcription of the *Gettysburg Address*.\*
- Have students read along while one person reads out loud.

- Using the guiding questions, discuss historical context and how we can infer some of Lincoln’s ideas about character by analyzing this document.
- Have pairs of students work on the Written Document Analysis Worksheet.\* Designate a scribe in the pairs—go slowly and thoughtfully—build in discussion time for the pairs and allow time to write.
- *If time allows, have students read the transcription of the letter inviting Lincoln to participate in ceremonies dedicating Gettysburg as a national cemetery\* and the Transcription of Edward Everett’s letter to Lincoln after the Gettysburg speech.\**
- Conclude by returning once again to the guiding questions for the Gettysburg Address. Select pairs to share their answers.

### **Exit Activity**

End with a reference back to the Opening Quote.\* How does Lincoln show strength of character, reverence for life, and the sovereignty of the union?

### **Extending the Lesson**

- Read and Discuss “Indiana in the War of the Rebellion”\*
- Activity: “Create Your Own Memorial”\*